Panama and other Poems

by Stephen Phillips

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PANAMA AND OTHER POEMS

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The King

Nero

The Sin of David

Pietro of Siena

Faust. (In Collaboration
with Comyns Carr)

PANAMA AND OTHER POEMS

Narrative and Occasional

BY

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

With a Frontispiece
by Joseph Pennell

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PANAMA AND OTHER POEMS

PANAMA

An Appeal to America

Suggested by the "Dirge" of Robert Underwood Johnson in the New York "Times," September 8, 1912.

Palter not, sons of Washington, for gold,
Nor see the Fane of dreaming Darien sold!
The imagined site of universal peace,
O be this let but on a spacious lease;
This destined bridge of ultimate embrace
For nations, be of grandeur and of grace!
Nor let that slow-reared Splendour stand suspect
Or by a rankling littleness be flecked.
That vast conception ye have bought too dear,
The dream magnificent have brought too near;
Vision, for which two peoples strove as one,
Until it leapt incorporate to stone!
Those bases were too broadly, deeply laid,
To be an argument for discord made.

Then creep not coast-wise down the shore of
Gain,
But spread full wings unto the ampler main.
Ye marry sea to sea, and tide to tide,
Atlantic bridegroom to Pacific bride;
"What God hath joined, let not man put asun-
der!"
Thus saith the Church in ritual of thunder;
Yet here, and in sublimer marriage met,
Oceans are joined which God asunder set.
A priestlike task is this, to reconcile,
Not troth of mighty waters to defile.

Since ne'er as here since first our earth began,
Rose Nature so invincible to man;
Nor came he to such splendid grapple yet
With massy force as in this problem set.
Nor e'er did mind give matter such a fall,
In wrestle that might hand and brain appal.
For Pharaoh vanquished a more level soil,
And lashed his millions to a lesser toil;
His slaves in dumb obedience strove with sand;
Lo! here a mountain pierced, a torrent
spanned!
By Pennell's magic pencil may be viewed

How mightily the mass is gashed and hewed;
There locks that bosom barques of monstrous girth,
Culebra's final challenge to the earth;
Chagres by Dam stupendous of Gatun,
Transforms its valley to a lake immune.
Steam-spurts innumerable start and sigh,
Thousands of toilers murmur near the sky;
Some blast with dreadful dynamite the hills,
Some sweep the débris that explosion fills.
All sings orchestral to the timing rod
Of Goethals, and obeys his potent nod.
Whate'er to man defeated Nature gave,
Whether to lisp his message through the wave,
And human language on the foam transmit;
Whatever he hath wrung by arduous wit
To waft him through the air in birdlike frame
Winging the midnight with an eye of flame.
All art of enginery of air or ground
Here apt and burnished for its task is found;
And bridled lightning lies and harnessed thunder,
To scorch a path or hurl a hill asunder.
Behold an universal haunt of ships,
Created proof 'gainst earthquake and eclipse!

Though, Panama, not yet the memories old
Of Suez' historied Isthmus thee enfold,
Suez that heard the legions of Thothmes,
The innumerable tramp of Rameses,
Or sound of Syrian or of Persian hosts
Militant murmuring t'ward Egyptian coasts;
Whose sands adventuring Bonaparte essayed,
Till Acre all that Eastern vision stayed;
Yet here thy history is just begun,
A legend that shall pass but with the sun.
A peaceful story thine! Of East and West
Now reconciled in deep unrankling rest.
Nor hast thou played, America, this part
Alone in conflict, but in healing art,
Since thou didst gird thyself a foe intense
To vaporous poison, and to pestilence:
And to the fatal fly with baleful breath,
That bears on gaudy wings the buzzing death,
That air that once was mortal now is pure,
And Eden rose a garden sweet, secure.
Where Goethals wrought in energy aflame,
Let Gorgas raise an equal plea for fame;
Who from the pest-house and the evil fen
Conjured a breathing paradise for men.

No speck then e'er abase thy starry shield,
Who mad'st reluctant nature thus to yield!
Break not thy pact! nor make the wide world
rue;
Thou art too mighty to be aught but true!
Thus wilt thou please, whate'er advantage
won,
Spirits of Lincoln or of Washington?
O loftier than all peaks in Darien
Thy honour soars; unclouded be its ken!

THE MIDNIGHT GUEST

The blackening wind to fury drove the wave
On the wild Breton coast: a man and wife,
Both old, sat crouching o'er a dying fire
In a decaying inn hard by the sea.
No food was left, no purse to pay the rent;
Tomorrow, with the first gleam of the sun,
Will they be cast forth in the public road,
Ragged and piteous, there to starve and die.
And still with louder fury howled the storm,
And by the cries and lights upon the shore
It seemed some barque was thrown upon the rocks.
Suddenly came a knocking at the door;
The old man faltering out returned to say
That with tomorrow's light they two must go,
Too long had patience been upon them spent.
Again for the last time above the faint
And fading faggot-gleam they crouched and wept.
And "Ah," said she, "if only our dear son,

Jean, had returned from over-sea: at least
He might have aided, or if not, consoled
His parents in this dark extremity."
And low another knock rang on the door,
Old Pierre again slow faltered to the latch,
And a young seaman bearded, well-equipped,
Asked for the shelter of that house to-night.
The barque where he had voyaged had been cast
Upon the Breton coast; some did he fear
Had perished; others swimming touched on land.
Old Pierre made answer that no food or wine
Had they within; the one room was unkempt;
"No matter for a night," the sailor then
Replied, "I have enough within my pouch,
Spite of the furious salt and bursting foam,
To purchase meat and wine and a warm fire,
Whereat we three will sit, and laugh to scorn
The thundering wave and deluge of the sky.
Here then, and hence, and quickly! For I pine
For food and drink and for the glowing coal.
And I perhaps will tell of other shores,
Adventure foreign, conflict desperate,
Which shall beguile the darkness until dawn."

So saying he drew some pieces from his pouch,
And aged Pierre set forth to purchase now
Such food and wine as might that night be had.
Soon he returned o'erloaded; and with glee
They sent the fire aroar and with bright flame
Upward: the roasted supper sweetly smelt,
And the wine ran through all the veins apace.
The seaman now as though at home, and glad
Of this warm welcome after plunging seas,
Stretched himself out, and sat before the blaze.
Still raged the storm; but yet within the fire
Was stirred, and burned; and such fare as they had
They relished more for all the storm without.
The wine threw back the blood upon their hearts.
At last the stranger, laughing in himself,
Asked for the bed, and how to climb the stairs,
And then what turn to take. In speaking he
Undid a satchel hanging from his neck,
And unsuspecting all his hoard of gold
Revealed; for, thought he: "they to-morrow shall
Share in what wealth I have; but for to-night
I will the jest maintain—but for to-night."

But as the gold out from the satchel shone,
And blood-red in the blaze a ruddy flame
Sent through the room, so as from fire to fire
The sudden thought from wife to husband flashed,
From husband back to wife. Weary he seemed,
A shipwrecked sailor for a pillow longing.
No sooner shall his head that pillow touch,
Than plunged into a deep unconsciousness,
Wrought of much wandering and the warring sea,
He will sleep on till the first streak of day.
No more than this the thought was rife as yet.
Then rose the old man beckoned by his wife,
And slowly shading with his hand the light,
Led upward o'er the creaking stairs his son.
After some faint excuse he left the man,
Who utter-weary threw his satchel by,
And as he was lay down upon the bed,
And without word or motion deeply slept.
Then said the wife, "Ah, Pierre, you saw the gold,
A quarter of that sum will make us safe,
Who is he that we should respect his life?

Some wanderer of the seas, and has perhaps
Himself this money gotten but by guile.
He has been sent to us in the dark hour,
For dawn to-morrow is too late; canst thou
Not steal up to him, making ne'er a sound,
And if he wake, thou hast but come to see
If more he may require. But if he sleep,
Old sweetheart, think upon thy fate and mine,
Let us not now be thrown out on the world,
Who scarce can walk or totter a few yards.
There hangs the old knife of thy younger days,
Rusted, but rust can slay deep-sleeping men.
Here take it—go thou silent up the stairs,
Hear if he breathes as one that slumbers deep,
'Tis but a moment, and our life to be
Prosperous, safe; no trembling at the knock,
No fear of cold ejection in the night.
Come drink and let the blood in thee that lies
Flow once again, and ere it fainter grows,
Steal noiseless up and strike and bring the gold."
With silent feet and rusty blade he crept
Up the old stairway, fretted by the moon,
And paused now here, now there, and held his breath.

She at the bottom stair listened and watched.
But when at last he entered in the room,
The perfect sleeping stranger he espied
Who seemed already dead, for without sigh,
Or motion in the moon he slept and smiled,
He drew his breath hard in and struck the heart.
The sleeper sighed but once, and deeply sighed,
The blood came from him crimson, but no cry.
Then the old man the bag of gold up caught,
In his left hand, and in his right the blade,
And swiftly down he slid into the room.
She paling at the blood, no longer rust,
Seized on the treasure-box and they two brake
Open the lid, and on the stones amazed
Stared for a time; but not alone were stones
Close-packed, but many a golden coin was there,
So that they need not starve for ever more.
Counting the gold they found that now their days
Might pass in comfort and in peace till death.
"Now when they come to-morrow," murmured she,
"Astonished will they be to take the rent,

For now no wild nights on the open moor,
No midnight bleakness have we two to face
But by the warm fireside to sit and chat,
And who, and who shall e'er suspect us two?
None saw the stranger enter, in the storm,
A hundred others on the beach were thrown,
Nor was he from these parts, where all are
known.
If we have sinned to sin we were hard-driven.
The golden opportunity so well
Presented to these famine-hunted eyes.
If we have sinned who being placed as we
Had sinned not? I repent no golden piece
That lifts not me alone but also you
Above the grinding wheel of penury.
Any who seized not on the chance were fools."
So saying, in the gold she laved her hands.
And rung the red coins sounding on the board.
Never a sweeter music had she heard
Of harp or moonlit sea or distant oar.
For this was music that the future held,
Melodious of warmth, rest and content.
But the old man still trembled like a hound
That is aware of presences about him
Invisible to men, and will not stir.

Still glanced he up the stair, and still he feared
The stranger yet might wake and was not dead.
But once again he climbed unto the room,
And found the sleeper colder than in sleep,
Stiff, silent, motionless, haggard and white.
Dawn broke in orange over lulling seas
And bright-subsiding waters. Chill it was;
She in the glimmer an attraction felt
To see the traveller dead in upper room.
Upward she creeps and disappears; the man,
Still trembling from the blood that he had shed,
Cowered o'er the fire or at the stairway foot
Stood waiting. Sudden rang a thrilling cry,
And his wife stumbled heavily and slow
Holding with trembling hand an ancient chain.
"Pierre," said she, "look on this ancient chain,
I twined it round his neck the morn he went
Seaward, and O my God what means it now?
We have killed our son! Bearded he is, and changed,
And none might recognise our beardless boy.
But to this chain I swear for evermore.
Lightly I hung it round his neck at dawn,

Lightly a moment since I took it off,
But, ah! our hands are dabbled in his blood.
I have slain my babe, my sailor and my man."
Whereat into a fury did she pass
Like one insane and cried and beat her head
Against the wall and wailed that she might die.
The man slow-bringing her to this world's sense
Reminded her with patting of her hands,
And smoothing of her brow, that none might know
Who was the stranger, whence, and why he knocked;
And if their only son so different
Appeared within the doorway, none could dream
That he was who he was. Small use to wail
But gather up the coins and wait the event.
Even as he spoke a knock came at the door,
He outward shambled, paying easily
The threatened rent; so still the day went on.
With night he dug a deep hole in the back
Of the small garden rounding on the inn.
And solitary with a lantern he,
For she would have no hand in it, the corse

Closed o'er, forever listening for a step.
So without other trouble or distress
From tax or rate or rent they three abode.
He silent under earth, yet still at times
Washed by the sea he loved so well. Those two,
Father and mother, silent till the grave.
Though dead he gave to them remission
Of many a care and many a carking ill;
He the old rusted knife whirled far away
Out from the window to a windy sea,
Which cleansed it of that blood for evermore.

LEAR ON THE HEATH

See on the heath the dispossessed old King!
Whom splendour had made narrow; now made grand
By pelting storm and furious rain and wind.
Now all the littleness is out of him;
And in the soil he is at last himself
Yet vaster; for in rags and misery,
And wandering half in madness to and fro,
He had achieved through woe a deeper sight.
The pealing heavens pronounce the human doom,
And lightning sears his spirit with insight.
Now naked to his eyes humanity
Is bared; the hypocrite he scorches up,
The prosperous liar sentences; the thief
Perchance he pities driven to his theft.
Before him all authority disrobed
Passes; the tinsel and the show of earth
He dashes to the ground, and hollow ring

Crowns and the pilèd gold and treasure
heaped.
And yet more hollow reputations ring,
Honour and glory that but seem awhile.
The very heavens make tumult for his sake
To show him man and woman guilty-stark;
Ah, what a judge of such a sight possessed,
Come at alone by wretchedness and rags!
Must we who never reigned, nor wore a crown,
We common men be doomed unto the heath
Ere we discern the shows and lies of life?
And must some persecution of the skies
Purge us that we at last may see indeed?
Or deeper tribulation of the soul?

PENELOPE TO ULYSSES

Thou marvellest, husband, that I sit so mute
And motionless, but gazing on that face
Which now the pine-fire throws up in a flame,
Now leaves in darkest night as thou dost lean
Massily drooping toward the log-fed blaze.
Such silence has come down upon us two!
Yet a good silence after so long years,
We only are awake and the live sea!
But thou who hast borne all things may'st perhaps
Bear with a woman's fancies while she speaks them.
Think not, my man of men, that I am cold
In passion or heart! Far otherwise! I see,
And nothing else I see, the brow that took
The blow of strange waves and the furious kiss
Of different winds, the sad heaven-roaming eyes,

The mighty hands that piloted all night.
Yet art thou paler than my dream of thee.
Forgive me, O my lord, but I must speak.
Well—all these years have I imagined thee
So constantly that now thy visible form,
How noble! seems but shadow of such sight.
For I have seen thee in the deep of night
Leap silent, sudden up the stair, and I
Fell toward thee in the darkness with a cry,
Fluttering upon thy bosom like a bird.
And I have seen thee spring upon this earth
At sunset dark against the fiery orb.
Then have I often just upon daybreak
Started and run down to the beach and heard
Thy boat grate on the pebbles: or again
It has been noon and thou hast come in arms
Over the sweet fields calling out my name.
Sometimes in tragic nights of surf and cloud
Thou hast been thrown headlong in howling
wind
On the sharp coast and up the sea-bank
streamed,
Alone. This then I strive to shape to words—
Thou hadst become with passing days and
years,

With night and tempest, and with sun and sea,
A presence hovering in all lights and airs.
Thou wert the soul then of the evening star,
And thou didst roam heaven in the seeking moon,
Thou secretly wouldst speak from stirring leaves,
And what was dawn but some surprise of thee?
So, husband, though this heart beats wild at thee,
Yet lesser in imagination
Art thou returned than evermore returning.
Nature is but a body from henceforth,
The soul departed, the spirit gone o of her.
The waves cry unintelligibly now,
That then "Ulysses" and "Ulysses" still
Hissed sweetly, privately, the livelong night.
Ah! but thou hear'st me not, canst only hear
A roar of memories, and for thee this house
Still plunges and takes the sea-spray evermore.
Yet come! How thou art weary none can tell,
How wise, how sad, how deaf to babbled words.

Yet come, and fold me, not as in old nights,
But now with perils kiss me, wind me round
With wonder, murmur magic in my ear,
And clasp me with the world, with nothing
less!

HAROLD BEFORE SENLAC

The Tragedy of a Patriot

BROTHER, you marvel why I sit alone,
Upon the Eve of battle, and speak not;
Yet hath a gift of dreadful sight been given,
To me, and speech I scarcely understand.
On Senlac Hill my host shall be o'erthrown,
I see myself fallen blinded to the ground.
Now it is borne on me that I must die.
My single life defers the Eternal will.
For it is fated that the Norman blood
With Saxon shall be mingled happily
And dead foes on the slope shall fraternise;
And from the wine blood-red tomorrow spilled
Shall spring a fortunate vintage of the earth
And a great brew from battle shall be made,
Till from that mingling shall an Empire rise
Vaster than any gazed on by the sun;
My life alone this solemn marriage mars

Of nations, and the purposed fusion stops,
Since while I lived England to me were true.
I stand, it seems, in the great path of Fate,
And by my dying must make clear her way
Till with the years and mellowing touch of time
The Norman close with Saxon shall be knit,
And stand together in the clash of arms
On many a foreign plain and alien hill
And in one host shall conquer and o'erthrow;
In solid square or charging fury grown
Invincible, archers that with their bolt
Shall bring a sudden darkness on the foe,
And many fields in glory shall be won.
Then shall this people feel for the furthest seas,
And tempt the very foam of fairyland,
And ultimate oceans, and the very deep
Shall be as a playfield underneath their feet.
And they shall plunge Armadas in the ooze,
England shall queen the waters of the world.
Then shall she lay her hand upon the east,
And the huge orient with a remnant grasp,
A glimmering shore of pearl and emerald,
A strand of throbbing glory and of gold,

Tribes in full stare of Phœbus and aspects
Into a dimness kissed by splendid suns,
And million turbaned peoples shall she rule.
Nor here alone shall England prosper; she
A mighty river shall ascend by night,
And with the morn a new dominion seize,
Cradle of heroes, radiant, snowy clear;
And on her builded Empire never sun
Shall set, nor any star refuse to rise.
But I perceive my doom and acquiesce.
World-Destiny, no less, requires my death,
And so shall one man for the people die.
But brother be thou well assured of this,
That never Fate, nor ever curse of Rome
Shall loose my knees, or make this heart to quail.
I will not fall without much Norman blood,
The Roman curse shall string this arm to steel,
The doom of Fate give edge unto this axe;
Dying I will be liberal with death,
I will not pass alone, but with me I
Will take great company into the dark.
Now pass we through our lines, ere the light warns.

VERGIL AND TENNYSON

O SKILLED with all thy Vergil's elder art,
The magic of the Muses to impart;
To sing of England as of Rome he sang,
With grand hexameter that rolled and rang.
And able with a far instructed might
The Latin lamp of splendour to relight;
Though on a northern shore by sullen foam,
Re-capture the dead melodies of Rome.
Thou too didst feel the passion of the past,
Things irretrievable and fading fast.
And thou didst hear aright the human cry
The sea-like strivings of mortality.
Though not to thee was his full utterance given,
Born to a different tongue and later heaven.
Tongue that alone in Milton could uphold
That lyre of thunder and the trump of gold.
But thou still following with faithful feet,
The charm of field and woodland couldst repeat;

Re-paint the faint vermilion of the morn,
And all the colours wherewith day is born;
And strangely sweet, as unto him to thee,
Of waking birds the mournful melody;
Voices of kine, in dark uncomforted,
In the dim hour, and ere the skies are red.
And yet wast thou content in mist, to be
World-sundered by the billows of the free,
And from that Island-eyrie to descry
The widening march of England's destiny.
Like him thou didst the courtier's part rehearse,
But never didst attain Marcellus' verse,*
Nor ever the dread world beyond the tomb
Didst thou explore with Orpheus, and the gloom
Where armed Æneas frighted half the shades,
Coming in splendour on the dimmer glades.
But this we feel, when thou hadst crossed the bar
The pilot of thy music was not far.

* "Tu Marcellus eris."

THE PASSING OF JULIAN

The Emperor Julian, "the Apostate," dying on the battlefield, exclaimed, "Vicisti, O Galilæe!" He fought the last fight for dying paganism against the Cross.

THE spear hath gone too deep; uplift me, friends,
That my last look upon the earth be clear.
I leave you on a disenchanted world,
Whence I am not unwilling to depart.
I would not tarry amid groves awaked
From the old mystery, and awe of leaves,
And sudden lights of beautiful faces,
Startled in holy greenness, or from forms
Naked, from pools disturbed, that dripping flee;
A grave and gentle spirit, powerful,
Hath brought in on us grey reality;
Making that beauty like a moon at dawn.
And the voice hath passed from the waves, the lamentation,
The human music from the Ægean thrown.

Ah, stricken are the horses of the Sun,
Faded is all the glory of Aurora;
Thunder is but a noise that was a voice.
Do ye not hear them still, the older gods,
Not all withdrawn, though sadly all withdrawing,
With melancholy soft departing voices?
O dispossessed, discrowned, deposed, dispersed!
And yet no lord of thunder or of flame,
Making this earth a second Semele,
Hath done this thing. A figure whist and still,
With woman-touch for all these troubled brows,
And healing whispers for humanity,
Wandering, but for a few followers,
Alone, and with no legions from the West,
Hath changed the ancient order of the world.
And yet I feel, even to the very bones,
This newer glory given to the world;
This sighing splendour and this ray of tears,
The upward labouring and the thorny path,
Ending—who knows?—in far invisible peace.
I can appraise, though with an alien will,
The sweat of blood, the thirst upon the tree,

The death that called the dead out of their
graves,
To wander through the streets unrecognized,
I acquiesce, I bow down, and I pass.
O thou hast conquered, Galilean! I
Have fought my last against thee and I yield.
But ah, my frighted woods, and emptied
groves,
Unhaunted meres, and thou great ocean dumb.
Lo! friends, one leans above me as I die,
The tender aspect of my Conqueror.

SEMELE

Semele lying in the arms of Love
In madness of too curious womankind,
Or in a woman's perilous vanity
Looked up into his face and murmured thus:
"Thou visitest me secret from the stars,
"But as an earthly lover, yet I know,
"Thou art a god descending in deep night
"Down from the flashing silence of the sky,
"Immortal for the touch of mortal lips.
"As thou art god, belovèd, swear to me
"One thing that I shall ask thee to fulfil."
Then answered splendid Love in human guise:
"I swear to thee the oath no god may break
"By stream of Styx, the holy wave of hell,
"River that steals amid exhausted ghosts,
"For ever rippling in the ears of souls,
"That whatsoe'er thou askest I will grant;
"And yet be fearful of too large request,
"Remember thou art mortal and must pass."

Then Semele said sweetly in his ear:
"This then I ask, that when thou com'st again,
"It shall be in full glory as a God,
"In flaming splendour and in rolling power,
"Love me a clear God, not as God disguised!
"I crave thy majesty as thou my kiss."
She sighed once on his lips, then hid her face.
But Love was sorely troubled at her words.
"Alas!" he cried, "release me from this oath,
"Which if I swear it Styx will ne'er relent;
"Should thus I visit thee, then would'st thou die,
"Shrivelled in glory insupportable.
"Then ask some other thing that thou may st live,
"Since, if I woo thee in my proper shape,
"Thou shalt be strewn in ashes at my feet."
"But I will ask no other thing of thee,"
Semele answered, "and what thou hast said,
"Incites me, being woman, to persist;
"Then if I die, I die a dazzling death.
"Swear then by Styx that thou wilt do this thing."
Then by that Stygian river, by whose wave
No God may swear and of his oath be free,

Love swore that he would come in his own
shape,
Knowing that of that glory she must die.
And Acheron heard and through her stagnant
pools
Muttering, recorded sullenly the oath.
So on the after-midnight when she stood
Mortal, with fluttering heart on the dark hill,
A God woke up the heaven and coming down,
Lightened and thundered out of her the life,
Making the woman ashes in mid-air.

HELEN TO PARIS

To-night, this very night, thou'lt have me go,
And see the mighty deep is bright and whist!
O visitor divine from heavenly spaces,
Come down to me, a star out of the stars!
Thou hast a charm, such as no mortal hath;
For we have many in Greece, comely and tall,
They take my eye a moment and are past.
But thou hast made me suffer, so I love thee;
Strange! for too well I know thou lov'st me not,
Though I have often feigned that in some look
Or casual word of thine some meaning lay,
And bent it this and that way in the night,
Straining at hollow solace in the dark.
Thou art too far above my fate to care,
And well I know that I in following thee,
Follow a shadow and no man, for thou
Hast nothing in thee of faith and steadfastness;
And yet but lift thy finger and I follow.

Now that the moment's come, Sparta is sweet.
Belovèd hills and places where I played,
A child with children ere I learned to love.
And he, my husband Menelaus, he
Was ever kind and full of cherishing
Though thou hast lightly laughed him from
my soul.
But Paris, though we go, I have a fear
That we are rousing the dread gods to strife.
Last night there was a flame upon the heaven,
As of some City into ashes turned,
But let the world reel on unto its doom,
Say'st thou but "Come," I come to the earth's
end.

THE DAUGHTER OF JEPHTHAH ON THE MOUNTAINS

VIRGINS, that to this height have followed me,
Now that the period of our wail is o'er,
I must descend to earth and die the death.
Then for the last time I lift up my voice:
How hard it seems from glory suddenly
To be cut off; for had I been a babe
Far easier were it to forsake the sun,
Unrealising what I lose in death;
Or had it come that I must die at last,
Snatching with veined hands at a flickering fire,
Living now forgotten; yet see me where I stand
Tip-toe upon some primrose bank of time,
Thrilled with strange scents, with golden ardours fired,
Ready for the revelation of life;
A palpitating priestess flushed with dawn,

Like some young singer with bird-bubbling soul
Wailing to die, such honey on his lips,
Yet sent to silence, fading unexpressed,
While the bright stars yearn o'er him from the orbs,
Gathering like splendid tears upon his grave.
But I so apt, so ripe for all the bliss,
May not have manhood's burning touch on me,
Nor may I bring those children to the air,
Weaning them, sweet and wise and lovable.
But his great vow demands a virgin's blood;
I give my country crimson baptism.
So let us now descend in order due,
And be it not seen on any maiden brow
A shrinking from the deed that is to be.
You mountains, you shall hear no further cry.

EDWARD THE PEACEMAKER

Dead is he who could melt the Russian snow
Sunlike, and thaw the northern enmity;
And the light-laughing city of the Gaul
So woo, that like a widow now she mourns.
Twice strong are we since he the sceptre grasped.
And be not this forgotten; that the acclaim
Of the wild crowd that throw their caps in air,
Or swaying multitude that flings huzzahs,
This was denied him; *we* saw not that work,
In silence wrought and many capitals;
Nor heard the timely word which bridged a sea,
Or happy whisper that a city charmed.
He used the banquet as a way to peace,
And barren ceremonial could turn
To deeper understanding of dispute.
Of this what record? Yet the genial hint
Over a wine-glass hath so much fulfilled.
Still laud we then our great Elizabeth,

Her, and those earlier Edwards, and who else
Have sagely swayed us; but of him we think
As of a man faced with a different hour,
A subtler throne, a more elusive task;
The difficult business of a sundered isle,
Yet now an isle that queens the foaming world.
Ah, never left his ears the English surf,
And in mid-feast he heard a free shore cry!
For not by written treaty ever, or peace
Torn up at will by some repentant State
The earth moves; but by wisdom such as this,
And tact supreme that never showed a flaw.
Then howsoe'er more loud and splendid seem
Conquest heroic, sad victorious fields,
Yet be it not forgotten that this King,
Bearing himself a genial gentleman,
Whispered the orb of Europe into peace.

VERSES ON THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE THE FIFTH

1

Once Alexander plunged into the East,
And at Arbela flood o'erthrew the Mede.
What of that Empire now, but lonely stone?

2

The Roman his discovered world amassed,
And high on his seven hills empurpled sat;
Yet rotting from within his rule decayed.

3

Others have builded since; and strongest he,
Who the old map of Europe folded up;
Yet printless on the sands of time his feet.

4

Now all those tumbled cities are re-risen,
The grass re-blows o'er all his battle-fields,
And verdure greener from that crimson blood.

5

A name! a haunting face! and there an end!
An arch triumphal, and a golden tomb!
The earth no single scar from him retains.

6

But thou, O King, all hail! Thou enterest
Into a kingdom dearer bought than these;
More surely stablished with a grander toil.

7

Remember those dead architects who still
From many a grave memorial o'er the world,
Lend hands of fame, though centuries asleep!

8

How many sailors plunged beneath the ooze
Still lift constructing hands up from the sea,
And whelmed in weed and coral, yet sustain!

9

Remember all the blood, and all the cries,
That slowly have thy Empire soldered sure,
Faces of women waiting without hope!

10

What! Is that sceptre heavy to thy hand?
Or heavy is that orb upon thy brows?
Think to what memories that weight is owed!

11

Since first in furious ferment there was wrought,
On Senlac hill that mighty blend of blood,
That fortunate world-vintage of the West.

12

Remember those French fields; the Armada's pride
Scattered, and tossed upon the Irish shore;
Then Cromwell, master first of the cold seas!

13

Remember Plassy, and the lonely Clive;
All India with our English graves inscribed,
And the huge Orient by a remnant held!

14

Remember the ascended river, and height
Stormed, and the dubious battle when Wolfe fell,
But reeling heard the cry, "They run, they run!"

15

Remember the grand clash of Trafalgar,
When dying Nelson smelt the rising wind,
And "Anchor Hardy, anchor Hardy!" moaned!

16

With these forget not half thy kingdom is
The song of Milton soaring to the sun,
Of deeper Shakspeare, wise from human pain.

17

And later music thine; but latest his,
Heavy with English sweet from Roman flowers,
A lonely voice; a lover of thy throne.

18

Verse thou inheritest not less than deeds;
A lord of rhythm as of rolling seas,
Of foam eternal, yet of loveliest words.

19

In that dim minster, when thy brows are crowned,
Against the pictured panes our dead shall stand,
And that which seems most vacant, most be thronged.

20

What anthems with their silence shall compare?
What voices shall their stillness interrupt,
Or mortal music their immortal hush?

21

Then grasp that heavy sceptre in one hand,
And in the other hold that heavy orb,
And all those memories be half thy might.

ENGLAND AND ROME

Sirs, now the heat of party strife is cooled,
For mightier issues leisure has arrived;
The large Imperial peril deeper calls.
Rome reeled and fell; but from a different foe;
We dread no horde barbaric, and by loot
From forests multitudinously lured,
With dreadful trample hollowing the ground,
Hurled out of leafy gloom on cities bright;
No! but a timed and calculated Force,
Unanimous, unhasting and unresting,
Sleepless, no moment, and no figure lost,
With silent thunder and with lightning veiled.
The German hath no vengeance he would wreak;
He at excluded bay and ocean chafes,
In sighing sullen unexpanded power,
With difficulty labouring for breath;
And groans with teeming loins for grander fields.
An island, solitary intercepts;

World-destiny, no less, the "Cause of War."
And come it soon or late, yet it will come.
Rome reeled and fell: she rotted from within,
Languid by luxury, by vice exposed;
We are not sunk into that sensual slush.
Yet who shall say, if on the final clash,
And all this potent people half-adream,
Apathy prove not an Imperial vice?

THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM

Easy the cry, while vengeance now is wrought,
And from his lair the Anarchist is burned;
"Shut be our harbours, closed be every port,
And from our shore be every alien turned!"
Yet while the clamour and pursuit is hot,
And public anger public madness breeds,
Be it not soon nor easily forgot
That England thus an ancient title cedes.
For centuries a pillow hath she spread
For all that widowed goes, and wandering;
And in her lap hath laid the unhappy head
Of broken statesman, and of outcast King.
Shall she, alarmed by that small horde, deny
This old sea-haven to world-misery?

November 1, 1911.

THE EVE OF DARKNESS

General Booth is threatened with an entire loss of sight.

Me darkness total and eclipse of light
Threatens; yet Lord, unto thy will I bow,
If not with gladness, yet at least with calm.
So deep my trust in thee I cannot doubt
This seeming cruelty to be but kindness;
The end thou knowest; 'tis for me to wait.
And yet forgive me if, rebelling never,
I so shall miss not merely fields withdrawn,
Fields and the surge and business of the streets—
Perhaps some over-zeal deserved this loss—
But most I so shall miss the kindly eye
And the brave, answering look of comrades, men
Dear to me, who so long have stood with me
Through desperate battle in the grappling war
'Gainst infidelity and wretchedness.

O I may clasp their hands, but no more see them
Till in some final rapture of the saved!
I so shall miss the faces bright upturned
In anxious human hunger for the word,
That would enkindle me like prophets old;
I shall no more direct, or cheer or fire,
I must be guided slowly now and pitied,
Feel for the place where I must stand to speak.
I fear too lest with blindness I may lose
That humour which at times hath won me souls;
Not the cold wit of devils, but warm laughter,
To see doth aid us, if we would awaken.
And yet perhaps, as thou didst Milton blind,
That he might see more clearly Heaven and Hell,
Thou art preparing me some other path
To rescue, to redress and to redeem.
Dark are Thy ways, then dark this way with me.
I know, although I pry not, that on me
Shall stream at last the effulgence of Thy day.

TRIPOLI

Written at the time of the war between Turkey and Italy.

"Bring forth the halt, the crippled and the
blind,
"Mother and wife and child pursue and find!
"To set them with their backs against the wall:
"Fire!" On their faces they in order fall,
Yet none of them exclaims aloud or calls;
The reeking Christian curses under breath
The Moslem deep indifference to death.
To-night shall Garibaldi roam thy ways,
Tripoli, and men dead in splendid days,
Stung from their graves in anguish of amaze.
Waker of lyric gladness, Italy,
Here hast thou raised a deep discordant cry.
Shall all thy warbled airs of liquid sound
Excuse these hooded bodies on the ground?

Or thy remembered Mario's wafted note
Avail this fierce iniquity to blot?
Mother of music and to colour wed;
What music this! What colour running red?

THE TITANIC

MAN said unto himself: "Lo I will build
"A stately palace to defy the deep,
"Vaster than any yet of man conceived,
"And I will furnish it with pomp of gold,
"Splendour of steel and armoury of iron,
"With gardens and with purple pleasure-
domes,
"Arbours of bloom, and terraces, and streets;
"A city to outride the wildest storm,
"To whisper without wire o'er all the waves,
"And murmur messages from central seas,
"Making the foam her tame interpreter.
"Let nature strike her howsoe'er she will,
"With lightning, or with thunder, or with ice,
"I send her seaward unassailable.
"O space unmeasured, where is now thy sting?
"O silence, where is now thy victory?"
So did he launch her in his pride of heart.
And nature heard his vaunt, but answered not
With thunder, nor convulsion of the earth,

Waiting. The Titan she a while allowed
Outward, with dreadful calm inviting her.
Swiftly the Titan swimming in full pride,
While men and women danced upon her deck,
Suddenly crashed into an isle of ice,
That silent ghostly sentinel of the seas.
They split, they split in twain, the armoured ribs,
Arbours and terraces and pleasure-domes
Reel to the deep; none dance, nor sing, but see
Darkness, and over them the glimmering berg;
Down went the pride of man and all his boast.
Nature, so far thou hadst thy will; to bring
To naught the works of man, sternly remind,
And re-assert thy ancient majesty.
But this thou couldst not quell, that never one,
Till child and woman were brought safe away,
Sought boat, but sank in silence to his grave.
In silence husband saw his wife depart,
In silence kissed his child and let it go.
Tearless the bridegroom bade his bride farewell,
Turning his face unto the hopeless main.
No cry was heard; in serried order stood
Captain and crew, the young man and the old,

The man of millions and the man of pence
Went down unmurmuring to an equal tomb.
The liners race to find a barren sea;
Yet sea—that now hath treasure more than
pearl.
You, then, that wail by harbour or by hearth—
Widow, or orphan, mother, bride or friend,
Envy the exaltation of that death!
Forgetting in that grand bereavement, grief!

SANTA CLAUS FUND 1912

Verses specially written for the "Evening News" (London).

WOMEN, if young ye be,
Or deep in years,
Shall your first doll recall
Not without tears.
Flaxen-haired, blue of eyes,
Ribboned with red;
What did it mean to you?
How much it said!
Buddings of motherhood,
Wish to caress,
Instinct to fondle, you
Could not repress.
Oft in the later years,
Mid falser joys,
Have ye not turned at night
Back to those toys?

Husband or friend ye find
Not what they seem,
Never your doll did fail
You of your dream.
Think then of little mites,
Lonely in mud;
Aid them to blossom there,
Help them to bud.
Give them some little gleam,
Damsels of five,
Lights out of fairyland,
Dolls so alive.
Think that these children have,
Mid all their mire,
Murmurs of motherhood,
Blindly aspire;
Something to dress, undress,
Give them to hold,
Bathe, and to put to bed,
Fold and unfold.
They, whatsoe'er their fate
Shall not forget,
This, that to-night your eyes
For them were wet.

Dolls, though of waxen smile,
Faces how frail,
Shall not in sterner years
Flee them or fail.

"HANDS OFF!"

"I believe there is a very general opinion that the victors are not to be robbed of the fruits which have cost them so much."—Mr. Asquith at the Mansion House.

Too long the Turk in Europe sits immune,
Too long the plains with Christian bones has strewn,
While "the great Powers" in silence bent their head,
And acquiesced in all those slaughtered dead.
The Impotencies deaf to curse and cry,
Preserved their splendid inactivity.
Who then arose? It was no mighty Power,
Who struck for Moslem rule the final hour.
Four little peoples hurled the monster down,
Warriors with something of the martyr's crown.
The cost they counted and rejoiced to bleed,
They set their teeth and swore they would be freed.

Now after all that sanguine sacrifice
Too late to portion here, and there to slice;
Too late to steal what cost them all that blood.
We looked for rivers, we beheld a flood.
"Hands off!" throughout all Europe ring the
cry,
Nor stay the victor after victory.

RED RUBBER

Written at the time of the Putumayo atrocities.

WHY is the rubber of that motor red?
To make it so a thousand Indians bled.
And England once the haven of the free,
Stands guilty if but as accessory.
The blood of woman and of child must gush
That Smith may on the road more smoothly rush;
The bleeding back by Satan's thong is scarred,
That Mrs. Smith's nerve-system be not jarred.
Against the tree they dash the child's brains out
That Brown may glide more easefully about.
And Indian forms reel riddled to the dust
To gratify an European lust.
Commerce and Christianity combine
And kneel at last before a common shrine.
Idle how long will England choose to be,
Who erst did whip the slaver from the sea?
Whose flag hath waved o'er half the world's oppressed,

Breathless the slave hath fallen upon her
breast.
How long shall she endure to have it hissed
"Britain and slavery at length have kissed!"
How long to see son, mother, daughter, sire,
Butchered to make an English motor-tyre?

THE KING'S RETURN

"I give to India the watchword of Hope."

Return, King Emperor, into the West,
And leave the glittering East, the golden
domes,
The sparkling spires, and glorying cities white,
Tribes in full gaze of Phœbus and aspects
Into a dimness kissed by splendid suns;
Magnificence of emeralds and pearls.
For now the paler West hath need of thee,
Although thou'lt hither step out of the East,
Blind as from sunlight to a darkened room,
And for a moment feel with doubtful hands,
Until the dim familiar home again
Grows round thee, dearer unto dazzled eyes.
Meantime thy Orient not in silence leave,
But like to one that waves a wise farewell,
Fading upon the limit of the seas,
Bequeath, O King, unto that Indian orb
Of brilliance supine, the watchword "Hope."

CENTENARY VERSES

Drury Lane

THIS night re-rose, a hundred years ago,
Old Drury from her ashes with new glow.
That night was she baptised with Byron's fire,
And leapt to resurrection at his lyre.
To-night what ghosts revisit Drury Lane?
What shades re-people this familiar fane?
To-night what memories do these walls inspire,
Which thrice re-issued, phœnix-like, from fire?
For Shakespeare's myriad fancies 'neath this dome
Found local habitation and a home.
Here David Garrick was at loss to choose
Between the Tragic and a Comic Muse.
The alternate Lord of laughter and of tear
Could roll with Falstaff and could rave with Lear.
Here Brinsley Sheridan how brightly shone!

Glittered upon life's midnight, and was gone.
With sparkling craft the passing age he hit,
But perished of a plethora of wit.
Here Siddons down the castle stairway stole,
Cleansing her hands of blood, but not her soul.
Or, as one drunk with triumph did she sway,
Reeling in glory down the Roman way.
Here solemn Kemble trod, behold him stand
And moralise on death, with skull in hand!
Here Edmund Kean first flashed upon the town,
And conquered London in a Jewish gown.
His face was lightning and his accent thunder,
The while he tore the human heart asunder.
And here Grimaldi mouthed at pomp and state
And in grimace presented human fate.
Dan Leno, as "poor Yorick" did of yore,
Here set the surging playhouse in a roar.
Here Lamb and Hazlitt sparkled in the pit,
For criticism then was winged with wit,
And on these boards austere Macready gave
To Moor or Thane demeanour grand and grave.
Who last of all appears? What holier shade

Familiar portals doth again invade?
See, on his brow he weareth Dante's bays,
But Henry Irving 'tis not mine to praise.
Here, where men saw those famous players
tread,
Let others rise to emulate the dead.
A second Siddons and a second Kean
Re-animate this memorable scene.

Spoken by H. B. Irving Oct. 10th, 1912.

SARAH BERNHARDT

A Salutation

O MYRIAD mooded child of France,
That still canst half the earth entrance!
Now panther stealing on its prey,
Now waking lark in breaking day;
Now tigress crouching in her lair,
Then dove afloat on summer-air.
Enchantress of the voice of gold,
That does the raptured playhouse hold.
Now hoarse in fury pour the words;
Anon the language of the birds.
Now sea of tempest in the trees,
Then murmuring of noontide bees.
I see thee wasting hollow-eyed,
The bright Hippolitus beside.
I see thee down the stairway creep
With fumbling hands and sleepless sleep.
I see thee mid camelias fade,
Mortal renunciation made.

I see thee as La Tosca dart
The hidden knife into the heart.
Millions of shadows on thee tend,
Fierce shapes arise in thee and rend.
Thou room re-echoing with cries,
And with the wail that never dies,
And immortality of sighs.
Temple which classic phantoms tread,
Thou resurrection of the dead.
Here we salute thee from a shore,
From France divided now no more.
No longer sundered by the brine,
But lightly, strongly bound to thine.

October 23d, 1912.

A WINDOW IN "ACACIA VALE"

Behold yon window, like a tank
With some dark depth behind;
Whence oozy eyes at times emerge,
To peer upon mankind.

They stare on thee, but see thee not,
Who in that dark reside;
All dank and private thro' that depth
With gaping mouth they glide.

That face that floats now to the pane,
Retains not what it sees;
Kind God, who madest all creatures once,
Didst Thou make even these?

JESUS AND JOAN

WHEN Jesus greeted Joan in the After-twilight,
When the Crucified kissed the Burned;
Then softly they spoke together, solemnly, sweetly,
They two so branded with life.
But they spoke not at all of Cross, or of uppiled flaming,
Or the going from them of God;
But he was tender over the soul of the Roman,
Who yielded him up to the priest;
And she was whist with pity for him that lighted
The faggot in Rouen town.

SILENCES

How sweet a summer Silence ere the bird-note,
When the dead night is glimmering into soul!

How rich that ritual Silence of the noon hour,
When God himself seems burning down on flowers!

How large that Silence of a million flashes,
When all the waiting glory is unrolled!

Yet ah! How fell that after-murder Silence,
Which now hath gotten a memory and a soul;

It speaks no more than a dumb injured creature,
Yet worse that Silence, since it may not speak!

Noble the Silence his that deigns no answer,
Who falsely stung, yet openeth not his lips!

Silence how beautiful of the young mother,
Stolen with a light to brood above her babe!

But Silence grandest that of the Creator,
Who silent lifts the heavy world to light!

SAVE WATERLOO!

There is a danger that the field of Waterloo may shortly be let in plots to the speculating builder.

FORBEAR! This plain is still too deaf with cries,
This soil too sanguine for thy stucco lies!
Shall Earth, where reeled "the Guard," thy villa pen,
Where nations groaned, be heard the cackling hen?
A mansion mark where in the gathering murk,
Those terrible grey horsemen so did work?
Here wilt thou dare to live where such men died,
And on that memorable dust reside?
Here only ever let the solemn moon
Uninterrupted weave a spirit noon;
Here only falter down a pensive dew
From skies too wistful to be purely blue!
But shouldst thou build on consecrated ground,

Then be those houses filled with spectral sound
Of clashing battle, and the ghostly war,
Of charging hosts against the battered door!
Let solemn bellow of hollow cannon boom,
A dreadful cavalry invade the gloom!
Until in awe of those who fell or fled,
The living flee from the more living dead!
That silence now too conscious is for sound,
It broods upon itself and is self-bound.
Then let no builder of this field have lease,
'Tis let to Time, the property of Peace!

March, 1914.

THE MAIDEN ON THE MOUNTAINS

The daughter of Jephthah went up with her maidens to the mountains to mourn her virginity before dying by her father's hand in fulfilment of his vow.

MAIDENS, that mourned with me upon the mountains,
This dedicated sad virginity,
And early frozen river of my youth,
That Death my bridegroom is, my couch the grave,
Let us descend at last, that I may die:
For being his daughter, I may falter not;
First of all things must he keep faith with heaven.
Girls, we have heard—have not our fathers told us?
Of that strange land beat by a western sea;
How there a father bitterly kept faith

With God, and slew his own child for the fleet.
From that paternal, sail-releasing blow
On Aulis beach, a virgin flowed to earth,
Still veiling her bosom from the eyes of men.
Then how should I, a daughter of Israel, quail?
Yet I so love this sunlight, in our fields,
Early to wander pulling simple flowers,
And watch the sun make all this mountain snow
A gradual rose. Alas that I must go,
Yet breathless with the beauty of the place!
And the sweet babble of children must I lack,
But most, the strong caress of him I loved,
The perfect full-eyed, undivided life.
Harder it is for me then, than for those
Who have enjoyed, and suffered, to depart.
Sisters, two things alone I ask of you:
First, that a little, if ye can, ye cheer
My father, either with the lyre or lute.
Then in that hour when the slow-falling sun
Bring evening and the shadows o'er his heart,
Release his eyes of tears with music then;
Though he be pained, yet were he better so,
Than in a tearless patience to decline.

Then him! Ah him, with whom my troth I made,
If he should at the last, more tranquil grown,
Ask one of you for wife, refuse him not!
Too dear I love him than to have him fare
Lonely and listless on through leafless life.
And now must I go downward to the arms
Of my kind father. Be the blow but swift!

TO A COUNTRY MAIDEN

Stay thou, maiden, in the dew;
Though thy pleasures are but few;
Be not anxious for the strife,
And the hustle we call "life"!
All our ladies stepping fine
Cannot match thee, sweetheart mine;
They but glitter, thou dost shine;
And their faces are but made,
Fresh at eve, with morn they fade;
Thou art rosiest in the dawn,
Laughing on the seaward lawn.
Tripping in a simple gown,
Go not thou to London town!

Which is fairer, the cut flower,
Gracing the hot ball-room hour,
Or the violet we espy,
Lighting on it suddenly?
All these gorgeous blooms I'd pass

To perceive thee, lovely lass,
Simply growing in the grass.
Tripping in a fragrant gown,
Go not thou to London town!

Maiden, stay thou still in dew,
Though thy pleasures are but few;
Shading hat with ribbons down
Charm me more than any crown;
Go not thou to London town!

A WOMAN TO SHAKESPEARE

My days are beyond reproach or breathing of scandal
In the placid inland town;
No man I owe; as I pass, all stand bare-headed;
A tale will empty my purse.
Each Sabbath I rustle soft to the seat set apart for me;
All eyes in the church are fixed.
Faultlessly, dimly attired, my lavender rarest,
About me voices are hushed;
And sweet is my little garden just after sunrise,
Sweet in the coming of night.

Yet, ah my God! I am lone, lonely for ever,
Am well, but wither within;
And in dead of night I lack the cry of a boy-child
Or the struggling lisp of a girl.

Must I linger on and languish amid the town-
folk,
Who guess not the ache at my soul?
Must I drift away to the everlasting lumber
That cumbers a thriftless world?
And the young wife dies in my street, but
really survives me,—
At least she has felt in the sun,—
And the girl deceived by her lover and thrown
from the house-door,
Her tears are richer than mine.
Yes, better the plunge in Thames, the sudden
seeking,
Than a death which was never a death.

O Shakespeare, of women confessor, from
whom no secret
Of a woman's bosom was hid!
Thou from an ancient page, my comforter,
comest,
Leaping from print to my life.
No woman so understood, or sang of a woman,
As a man with a poet's heart.

Spite of this placid, speckless, reproachless
dungeon,
Thou understandest; enough!

As I read I am wafted so far, am backward
wafted,
To the gorgeous-dreaming East.
To be young in Egypt, to lie with Cleopatra,
To have some Antony's kiss.
She drank of a heaven by Nile, a world in the
balance;
Even with the asp at her breast,
She gave as a mother her breast to a mortal
baby,
For a long immortal kiss.

Have centuries past? Shall centuries, then,
oppress me,
This dimness in place of the glow?
This soul can love as they loved, whose stars
were huger,
This dim town is for a time.
For the bare passing of time can touch not my
spirit,
Though a moment may mar it quite.

And often the glimpse of a moon on an ebon
night sky
Hath wildered a boy and a girl.
For a while I am pent from life, am hindered
from living;
For a while, and but for a while.

THE APPARITION

An addition to a former poem.

1

Last dawn she stood within my room,
I asked her without dread:
"Why com'st thou, dear, in this wan hour
So shyly from the dead?"

2

She answered, but her voice was cold,
Sweet, but a-cold with death:
"Only between the Dim and Dim,
Have I a moment's breath."

FORCE OR FAITH

"This war is not merely a material, it is also a spiritual conflict."—The Prime Minister, at the Guildhall.
"This is a war of Christ against the Devil."—The Poet Laureate in "The Times."

To Satan, not to Jesus, must we kneel,
If backward from the barbarous brunt we reel;
Rear we our altars and reserve our dread,
Not for the Lord of Love, but Lord of Lead!
Let all mankind this grapple sternly teach
To see the immortal in the mortal breach!
Here's more than clash of Germany and France;
Is Love a law, or stands the world at chance?
What Christ hath said, or what the Hun hath wrought,
In Europe to the bloody test is brought.
When towns are ashes, and the child outraged,
Is God's mild Son in such a wrack engaged?

Or must that wistful dawn ne'er wax to noon,
Be but the shifting sorrow of the moon;
Yon unavailing goddess, vainly high,
Fain to redeem, yet fated to descry?
The German breaks the cross of Christ in twain,
The new Goth burns the olden Gothic fane;
A panorama rolls of cries and fire,
Attila is re-risen from his pyre!
If these prevail to blacken and to blot,
Let ailing Faith in this wide grave-yard rot!
And Force triumphant, whom no pity bars,
Move now the sun in heaven and all the stars!
Here Satan once from heavenly rampart hurled,
Renews the strife and dares embroil a world!
Roaming unsatisfied he tempts again
Battle eternal on an earthly plain.
He brings a mind unchanged, untaught to yield,
And on his brow the thunder-scar, unhealed!
Behind this horde his legions dispossessed
Murmur with injuries yet unredressed.
Defeated fiends this human warfare wage,
And disinherited Archangels rage.

Better the issue joined, proclaimed the cause,
Than militant, intolerable pause!
Too long the earth hath wavered to and fro;
For ever now into the balance throw
The Lords of Heaven against the Lords of
Hell
In irremediable, fierce farewell!
With but one lightning is this thunder rife;
Shall man in Force or Faith discover Life?

DEATH AND DREAMS

Beside you though I lie, alone I dream,
To what a distance in a moment hurled!
While on the couch so nigh to you I seem,
My soul is travelling fast a different world,
Though through the day in field, or traffic-thunder
Rarely we wander with divided feet;
By night how suddenly are we asunder!
In mine your hand is, yet we may not meet.
And fearful then I grow lest you or I,
If but a dream can make us strangers quite,
In dream should wander whence we cannot fly,
Nor in this earthly house again unite.
If sleep can so estrange, an eyelid's close,
Then what a sheer farewell may Death impose!

THE KAISER AND BELGIUM

He said: "Thou petty people, let me pass!
What canst thou do but bow to me and kneel?"
But sudden a dry land caught fire like grass,
And answer hurtled but from shell and steel.
He looked for silence but a thunder came;
Upon him from Liège a leaden hail!
All Belgium flew up at his throat in flame,
Till at her gates amazed his legions quail!
Take heed, for now on haunted ground thy tread,
There bowed a mightier War-Lord to his fall;
Fear! lest that very grass again grow red
With blood of German now, as then of Gaul!
If him whom God destroys He maddens first,
Then thy destruction slake thy madman's thirst.

REVENGE FOR RHEIMS

Thou Permanence amid all things that pass!
Unchanging thought amid the drift of change;
Thou Rally of the Soul in days of dross.
How art Thou fallen!

Thou Prayer, that ever-rising, yet remained,
That for seven hundred years didst sing and soar,
Spirit with wings outspread tip-toe on earth,
How art Thou fallen!

Thou Vision frozen, and Thou Sigh transfixed;
Thou Camp of dreams, Thou Fort of faith unstormed,
Time-worn, yet wearying t'ward Eternity,
How art Thou fallen!

Thou wast to France her Inspiration old,
Thou hadst for ivy earliest memories;

From Thee her Knights, her Angels long
looked down;
How art Thou fallen!

What vengeance for Thy ruin shall she hurl?
O, be that vengeance that the ruin stand,
And only Choirs for ever unrestored!
Ever unfallen!

THE HUSH

THERE is a hush before the thunder-jar,
When white the steeples against purple stand;
There is a hush when night with every star
Pales on the summer like a dwindling brand.
Now a more awful hush appals the soul,
When concentrating armies crouch to spring;
Stillness more pregnant than the thunder-roll,
An European dawn with redder wing.
The Teuton horde no conscience onward drives,
Sullen they come; to slaughter shepherded;
Timed for the shambles with unwilling lives;
With doubt each soldier is already dead.
The massed battalions like a myth shall reel,
Vain but to fight if first they cannot feel.

August, 1914,
Before the Battle of Mons.

WOMEN AND WAR

Women of England, yours how hard the task,
Service from you how difficult we ask!
Glorious to stand against the leaden hail,
In the mown war-line not to flinch or fail!
Splendid the onrush and the charging cheer,
Yet glorious too to check the coming tear.
The doubt by night to stifle, through the day
The deep alarm not outwardly betray.
O dull expectancy that finds not vent!
O silent anguish that *will not* lament!
O mad uncertainty from dawn to eve!
O worse to wait than battle to receive!
Heroes are ye, who but the sob repress,
Your victory dumb is victory no less!

August, 1914.

THE SHIRKER

He moors the skiff within the cooler gloom
Of river-branches, unaware of doom;
Cushioned he lolls and looks in faces fair,
Nursing with placid hand anointed hair.
It seems he scarcely can uplift the weight
Of summer afternoon, far less of fate.
So the young Briton, sprawling in his strength,
Supports a heavy Sabbath at full length,
Till sinks the sun on more than that sweet
river,
Perhaps upon our day goes down forever!
But though that orb may on an Empire set,
Tomlinson lights another cigarette!

August, 1914.

LAMBETH

"The Lambeth guardians have decided to deprive the children of the Union of the Christmas breakfast-egg to make them realize the gravity of war."—Daily Chronicle, Nov., 1914.

O Dickens! wert thou with us still,
Here is fresh matter for thy quill!
Who said that Bumbledom can die?
Lambeth, arise, expose the lie!
In time of war, in hour of stress,
Only denial wrings success,
And fat and solemn guardians feel
Each patriot should curtail his meal.
What better season could be found
A nation's gospel to expound
Than Christmas? Then too much we eat,
Gorged with unnecessary meat.
We ask not guardians to make
Such sacrifice for country's sake;
Yet they can teach the Union-brat,

Who through the year grows overfat,
To practise abstinence at last,
And most on Christmas Day to fast.
Then to the Poor Law children preach,
The rising generation teach.
Enough that guardians sowed the seed
Of future England's temperate breed.
O, let the workhouse learn control,
To stint the body, save the soul;
And let its pampered children beg
Vainly the Christmas breakfast-egg!

THE SEASIDE-KNUT

I MET a trouser-wearing shape
A-strolling by the sea.
I said to him: "Will you enlist?"
But he replied: "Not me!

"I know a trick worth two of that."
I said to him: "Why not?"
"For many reasons," answered he,
"The climate is too hot.

"It cuts into one's evening so
To be obliged to fight;
And then one wears such heavy boots,
And I prefer mine light.

"And then they make a beastly noise,
The bullet and the shell;
I'd rather hear 'The Circus Girl,'
They play it here quite well."

"But if," I said, "all English youths
Were in your way inclined?"
"Whether they are or not," said he,
"I really shouldn't mind.

"I'm going now to have a drink,
A little sherbet hot;
Perhaps you'd split a bun with me,
Or would you rather not?

"The Lyons' place is very good,
Quite like a 'lion's den.'"
He smiled, then yawned: "It's time for bed;
D'you know, it's nearly ten!"

And though a girl presented him
With a white feather, he
Seemed pleased. "It makes a change," he said,
"In button-holes, you see!"

THE QUEST OF HAIDEE

A Poem in Ten Cantos

Canto I

The universal lure exercised by London.

London! Thy lure is over all the world.
For thou dost call the plough-boy from the plough,
Or aged labourer from his clayey toil,
Or farmer from his stacks and mellowing fruit.
The highroads to thee with wild hopes are thronged,
Thou art the mighty candle of the world,
In whose flame all those human moths are burned,
Returning and returning till they drop
Shrivelled at last, yet fain still of the flame.
The young girl, discontented in her lanes,

Yearns to be whirled into thy fuller life,
And then falls strangled or returns to die.
The widow, pined with solitary thought,
Throws out at eve her lonely thought to thee,
And sighs for the distraction of thy streets,
The numbing roar, the hoarse relief of wheels,
And mesmerising murmur. Now to thee
Returns the mother, o'er her boy to watch,
Her only son, by many a snare beset
In thy great whirlpool. Little can she do
But pray alone and trust her vehement sigh
May pierce the dreadful curtain thou hast raised,
As though to hide thyself from God himself,
And to transgress obscure. The good man hears
Thy far off soft depopulating voice,
And desert-making whisper and he feels
That thou wilt give him greater space for good
And wider opportunity, and wings
That may sustain him in such arduous flight.
In thee the schemer sees more scope for schemes
And dazzling crown for cold audacity.
How shall the thief in country lane employ

His dexterous art? To thee, to thee he comes
And thou receiv'st him, as all others, well.
Why should the village queen, so fresh of face,
Wither beside the winding of the stream
And age unseen beneath the ancient elm?
To thee she carries, one dark night, unknown,
Unguessed at, unsuspected, all she hath;
A cheek of wanton dew and milky bloom,
And thou dost take her in thy fell embrace,
And dryest all the dew upon her cheek,
And makest pale her bloom. Yet some have come
To make within thy shadow splendid names,
Trudging unknown through many a weary field,
By mighty hope upheld; or driven perhaps
From quietude by fate to waiting glory,
And crown which thou alone didst hold. And yet
Even of these we must remember some
Who wrote and wrestled, but went down at last;
He who in great hope coming from the North,
Carrying his thoughts with him like arrows sheaved,

Took poison for the bread thou didst deny.
And some whom thou hast called, in theatre
And senate, or by fire of written page
Have risen unto glory. Still to thee
The seaman turns far out on landless foam,
And for thy harbours yearns and for thy docks.
The soldier standing sentry in midnight,
Under the Northern or the Eastern star,
Remembers each familiar street and haunt
Where with his friends he drank his final cup,
Ere for the distant conflict he embarked.
And thou dost call to thee the glittering East,
The sparkling potentates of sunwashed plains,
Thy whisper's in the ear of the orient
And sad and dark and bearded, yet arrayed
With all those filched lights of Indian soil
They ride thy streets. For ever, city strange,
Thou shalt attract, some to a desperate doom
And to thy multitudinous loud grave;
Others, though fewer, to the throne of souls.
Thou feedest like a spider on thy sons,
Enmeshed, enwebbed, thou feedest on them slow.
Thou beckonest, and thy river is the bourne.

Thou whisperest and dark winter is the end.
A million hearts that beat beyond the seas
Beat but for thee. What loveliness is thine,
What mass of pinnacle or masonry
That lures the wanderer back, the stranger
charms!
Thy beauty that so fascinates the soul,
Is not of rule or line, to be appraised,
Or shown as model: but beneath the moon
Thou art as history laid bare, and strange
As fable or as legend are thy towers,
Bridges with beauty clothed and silent stream
That flows with all its memories upcast.
Is this the hour, the hour of midnight deep,
London, that thou becom'st a living thing,
With superhuman power, with spirit will,
With strong attraction on the air of night?
Is this the hour thou weavest, without word,
The spell that draws the village girl and boy
All to forsake and run into thy arms?
Or art thou like some goddess, sitting blind,
Feeling with dreadful and with doubtful arms
Outstretched to take, to imprison and to stay?
And now for centuries thou hast had power
To woo from alien lands and other shores.

One maiden in old time out of the East
Wandered from Palestine o'er perilous sea
And hostile land to seek that lover out
Who by her father had been prisoner held
And whom she learned to love with secret heart.
And knowing but one word, and that thy name,
London, and murmuring London, on and on,
Fought out her long way to his English arms.
Her then I sing and how to thee she came.

Canto 2

Long on the plains of parching Palestine,
Under the Eastern sun or Eastern stars,
Had Europe's chivalry with Paynim clashed,
In doubtful shock and in protracted siege,
To wrest from heathen hands the tomb of Christ;
And many a mighty deed was seen and sung,
And many a brave man bit the bloody dust,
And many in strange dungeons were detained,
Of all who took the field of Palestine,
Leaving the English cliffs and barriers pale
To battle for their Lord on distant shore.

None fairer shone in tent or tournament,
Or in the raging battle's wild onset,
Than young A'Becket from fair London town.
How strange to him from London streets to fare
Over the grey sea to that fiery shore.
What different fields he viewed, what other skies,
A larger sun with nearer fire; and stars
Pulsing magnificently in a vault
More thickly strewn than here we ever scan.
For if the star of Love in English heavens
Shows beautiful, more beautiful she glows
In Eastern midnights or in Eastern eves;
A sudden palace of immortal love
Disclosed in sapphire and in flame revealed.
He often, after the hot fight was over,
Would from his tent come forth into the cool
And feel the vastness of that serried host,
Removed from battle and from human strife.
And he drank strength in from immortal space,
And death itself seemed but a little thing.
To die and pass into that glory of light!

The thought gave strength unto his arm at dawn
And a cool careless courage to his brow.
Oft in the mortal joust of spurring steeds
Had young A'Becket foremost shone and struck
And many a desperate necessary charge
Had led; but though in thickest fight so oft,
In rally or retreat or dangerous shock,
Ne'er had he suffered wound to keep him fast
Within the camp or from the saddle hold him.
It seemed that where he pricked without a fear,
Or thundered without qualm amid the press,
That there alone was safety; yet at times,
Did others so essay ill fared they all;
Some trampled under foot, some travail taken,
Some fortunately borne by comrades back.
But at the last it chanced, before the walls
Of some high city that had long endured
The shock of European chivalry
And stood unshaken yet, at last it chanced,
For Fortune will not evermore uphold,
And of her favourites wearies in her time,
That Gilbert, so the boy had at the font

Been named, was struck from off his horse and fell,
Blind in his own blood in the rising dust.
The wound was deep and he could lift not arm
Nor rise, while in the twilight now his friends
Retreated, all unknowing of his fate.
He was made captive as he lay near death
By an Emir El Selim, bearded, grave,
Silent and proud, for to the Sultan scarce
He bent his knee, so old his lineage read,
So pure the blood he bore within his veins.
He then commanded that his prisoner
Should to his castle suddenly be borne,
And there immured until his friends should seek
To free him by rich ransom from afar.
Here then the English soldier lay for long,
Until his captor, silent, stern at first,
Was won to speech and with his prisoner,
Who slowly had that Eastern tongue rehearsed,
Would long hours of the olden land enquire
Whence Gilbert came, and of the city famed
Whose name was noised unto the orient.
So as a guest he now entreated him,

And half he hoped that Gilbert would abide,
Making his home there in a foreign land,
For the Emir had no son of his own.
No son had he, only a daughter fair,
As beautiful as is a summer night
Or summer eve ere yet the moon is risen,
A breezeless night of clear and cloudless bliss.
Although her eye might melancholy seem,
Holding within the secret of all night,
Yet was her smile like sudden Paradise,
And seemed to lap one in a warmer world.
And when she spoke, her voice was as the sound
Of some lone rivulet on mossy stones,
That in the green heart of a forest flows
Afar from men, unheard but of itself.
She then the wounded man was at the last
Permitted by her father to o'erwatch,
And tend the deep scar that so near to death
Had brought him. Sweetly ministering she
Moved as an angel round about his couch,
And first would smooth a pillow for his head,
Or some cool draught would bring him to allay
The fever that would rise upon his lips;
And ever as she came she longer stayed.

And though at first in broken jargon, he
From converse with her father, slowly learned
To speak to her in language of her own.

Canto 3

So West the East and East the West allured,
For to his Western eyes and colder blood
She wore a shimmering charm which English maids
Lacked; moving all too slowly, without grace.
Beside, she had a sweet variety
Of swiftly changing mood from smiles to tears,
From tears to smiles, a true yet fickle way.
At times she seemed the vision of the East
Made flesh; of gold beginnings of the world,
Where first the sun sprang and the seas uplit.
And all that feminine uncertainty,
So that he never knew from hour to hour
How he should find her, both perplexed and pleased.
There was no dullness in that intercourse,
Which is the death of western marriages;
Where, all the fire died out, the married sit

In hopeless silence, or with solemn words
Eke out the hapless evening: blessed perhaps
With riches and substantial toys of life;
Yet on the gleaming silver they avert
Their looks, and since together most alone.
The music of her feet was as a dance
Perpetual, and her voice as from the stars,
Not hallowed, yet from finer regions come.
After our staider virgins she allured
His heart, his very sense, and as she moved
In Eastern pity for a western wound,
She seemed to move as an immortal shape,
Sent down from the great skies to tend his hurt.
If then this Eastern maiden had such power
Upon the prostrate soldier; yet had he
No less attraction for the Eastern maid.
Shattered was all her life for sake of him;
To her wild eyes his slower strength appealed
As shadow against burning peril, or
As cool protection and as guidance sure.
His measured words were full of deep advice
And of a colder wisdom than she heard
From the bronzed fiery children of her clime;
His fair hair and his blue and Saxon eyes,

Were things most strange and novel to her gaze.
Then too that he was wounded in fierce fight
Caught at her woman's heart; that he was young,
That in a hundred jousts of violent arms
He by the clear admission of his foes
Had flinched not once, but where the peril was
Had ever there been found; for courage then
As still, will fire a woman to a man.
And he being simple and she subtler far
Wove a still firmer bond between the two.
For she would laugh out at his artless speech.
Though he so much had seen, she so much less.
She in her inexperience was more wise
And in her woman instinct grasped at truths
Which to the world-worn soldier were denied.
He like a child was taught the great world's love,
Even by a girl imprisoned as a child,
Excluded from all converse by the rule
Of the fanatic race with whom she dwelt.
Yet held so close, and veiled, invisible,
Her learned soul in silence she maintained,
Her maiden heart of passion was compact,

Her virgin body knew the secret thrills
Of midnight or of twilight or of dawn.
Then too the strangeness of that far-off land
From which he came, the mystery of the West
Set her adream and foreign cities charmed;
She heard the great sea beat but on his speed,
She saw the long wave foam but in his voice,
And the hoarse beach but echoed in his tongue,
The ocean in his memories came to her.
Most of that city London whence he roved
She grew to think, the high and narrow streets,
The merchants and the warriors and the knights.
And "London," "London," to herself would say
As though some talisman against a hurt.
These things, the growing passion of these two
The Emir regarded not: on many an eve,
When the intolerable sun was down,
He would to question and to conference
His prisoner draw, his prisoner now a guest,
Made free of that huge castle so that he
Might wander where he would no question asked.

And to that fierce and silent Eastern mind
Came no suspicion of his daughter's thought.
There would she live till he in his good time
Found for her hand a suitor of her race.
Had he suspected all that growing fire,
His dagger on young Gilbert's heart had been,
His dagger in his daughter's bosom plunged.
No friendship, and no filial love had stayed
The shiv'ring blow; but he, while these two burned
Each for the other with a flame more strong,
As any sun lent to that flame a torch,
Paced to and fro unconscious, deaf and blind.
And yet more lingered she about his room,
Moving this thing or that to give excuse
For all the tarrying, and could hardly draw
Her eyes away from him as she at last
Departed silent; and he evermore
Followed with luminous glance her every step.

Canto 4

But now at last, despite the glimmering charm,
The gliding motion round about his couch
And the soft voice like evening in his ears,

Gilbert, as now the wound to healing grew,
So yearned out of the East for Western fields.
Not for the streets of London he repined,
But he remembered, deep in country soil,
A rising spire that pointed to the clouds,
And circling rooks and heavy slumbrous trees,
And grasses of green England growing bright.
A rude and pealing music broke his dreams
Often; and he would start up in his bed.
Only the eastern moon and eastern stars
In a hot silence bickered and were still.
And buzzing flies, and all that nightly stings,
Stings and is shrill, the human ear torments,
These things tormented him in dead of night.
For here a branded heaven his eyes beheld,
A windless midnight, and like staring eyes
Great stars upon him lent an aspect fierce.
And more and more he longed for English
nights,
For drifting clouds and silent falling dew,
For the soft crowded gardens of the West,
The drowsing bird and gradual ceasing song,
The trees from moment until moment stirred,
The foliage now wind-taken and now still.
Then the sweet cattle with low voices he

Recalled amid the angry hum of flies,
Voices of milk far-off, the lowing kine,
Or the dim music of a hundred doves.
Alas, how cool, how fragrant and afar
These ancient sounds and ancient sights appeared,
And often would he speak to her of these.
But she though wishing every wish of his
To grant, and being moved by all this speech
Of him who lay sore wounded on the couch
Yet could not face again a lonely life,
Where this strange influence had lain on her.
If she had seen him never, never nursed
This alien soldier back unto his strength,
Then little had she heard of English clouds
Or English gloamings, or the floating bird,
Or smell of the heaped hay of which he spoke,
Forgetful of his wound a moment then
And rising on his arm to speak to her.
But he had burst into her life, and now
Not easily could she a parting bear.
For much it was to her although perhaps
Briefly she saw him, briefly heard his voice,
Yet much it was to her to know that he
Was sleeping under the same dome as she;

For being woman she could lie content,
Knowing the masonry that wound her round,
Him also held; there was no need of speech,
Or even of look, though both of these were sweet;
The moonbeam that upon her fell, on him
Fell with an equal silver: this she knew,
And knowing this her eastern patience kept.
But if he went from her to cross the sea,
And the great water put between the two
And nevermore unto the East returned,
But there where he was born, in peace remained,
Perhaps another maiden of his race
To take unto his bosom and his heart,
How should she the bright noontide of the East
Or darted light from many a blistering star
Endure alone? So she made bold to speak.
And somewhat in such words as follow here,
Did she in her sweet jargon with long sighs
The heavy secret of her heart disclose:
"Oh, sir, I fain would help you to the shore
From which to battle for your master's tomb

You crossed the Seas, and since in many a fight
Wert crowned with glory, till at last unhorsed
And deeply wounded to our house wast brought,
Where not unkindly, as I think by me,
Nor by my father hast thou tended been.
For more as to a guest or neighbour dear
Have we discoursed with thee, and hour on hour
Unwearying beside the lamp have talked.
But ah, I grudge thee to thy cloudy skies,
And to the breaking sound of English seas,
I speak quite simply out, I love thee then,
And love with the quick passion of our race,
Since first beneath our portal thou hast come.
But what perhaps was fancy then has grown
Into a something not to be despised
And not discarded lightly; for each hour,
Each moment has been guiding me to thee.
My life was shattered, but to be rebuilt
On grander issues, and on mightier thoughts
Than ever in this lonely East had been.
Thou art a new thing come from far away,
Bringing a different air, another light

With thee and having seen the one no more
I can forget, or part thee from my mind.
Then if I aid thee to escape, how then
Stands the lone soul that watches thee depart?
Why should I send thee from me to my hurt?"

Canto 5

But Gilbert tossing thro' the sultry night
Exclaimed: "Sweet Haidee, by these burning stars
I swear I am as loth to leave thy side
As thou, thou sayest, art loth to see me gone.
Me thou wouldst please in aught, I know it well;
How often hast with thy Eastern swiftness done
What I with slower Western mind had thought,
Sweetly preventing the dull speech that rose
Even then upon my lips; or some request
Unuttered hast thou granted instantly;
Surely this is the half of ministering,
Not only to stand ready with the draught,
To time the pulse and cool the beaded brow,

To smooth the pillow or the coverlet,
All these are well and hasten health again;
But subtler is the silent ministry
To mind, the understanding of the eyes,
To hear the unspoken whisper of the sick.
Ah, fortunate he, who stricken on his couch,
Watches a lady of high breed and blood
Steal to and fro, with guesses beautiful
Responding to the muteness of the mind.
Such hast thou been to me; by day, by night,
And understanding too how all unused
To the great fire so closely wrapping us,
Or nights without a breath, this frame has been.
What was most natural a delight to thee,
Thou yet couldst see was to a stranger hard,
And difficult unmurmuring to bear.
Such wisdom cometh from the heart, not head,
And more in women than in men is found.
All this I know; that thou wouldst gratify
Each smallest whim if in thy power it came,
Much more a deeper longing that each day
Grows stronger, to return unto my land.
Yet even with thy hands outstretched to aid,
Falters thy heart, and lingers half thy soul.

And thou dost grudge me to the English
breeds.
But, Haidee, though I love thee and each day
More truly; though I would thy heart were
spared
The arrow of our parting and the sting,
Yet in the night dear faces visit me
In hopeless sorrow and with watching pale.
Faces not young nor beautiful as thine,
But thrilling out of childhood and brave youth.
I can but think upon my father old
Who goeth to and fro the house undone
And mourns for me in silence day and night.
I can but think upon my mother grey,
Who sent me forth to battle with such pride
And yet such sorrow, for her heart misgave
If she should ever see her son again.
Ah, I can feel these two sit hand in hand
In heavy evening ere the stars have come,
Hopelessly gazing through a falling dew.
No word perhaps is said: and yet I see
From time to time one hand the other press,
Or a slow tear come to the eyes and fall.
For they abide beside a lonely sea,
Now that old age from London has withdrawn

The hurrying merchant weary of his bales
And hospitable rites of many friends
Not unpleased to be ridded at the last.
So from the lone sea-window will they watch
The unresponding ocean, and cold foam,
And hear the friendless rhythm of the brain,
For of my comrades who have safe returned
What do they know? Whether I live or die,
Or wounded or imprisoned, or to death
Put secretly in dungeon of the East?
All they can tell and most they can report
Is that unhorsed I on the ground was left
None knowing, while the host retreated safe
From ramparts unassailable and strong.
And how they will have hope that still I live,
And suddenly may come again to them,
And how the hope will go out as a light
And they believe me dead in a strange land.
For, Haidee, know I am their only son;
No other have they, and no daughter young
Who might console, support, at least distract
The fixèd mind and old remembering hearts.
I was their sunrise, I was all their dawn,
Themselves forgotten; to my fate they looked,
And ever glorious as they looked it seemed.

But now a blank has settled down on them,
Uncertainty far worse than cruel truth:
For dreadful as the shock and news of death,
It spends itself, and slowly tolerable
The sun returns and the moon goes her path
And in a daze and heavy dream we move,
Save now and then for the quiet hidden dart
Of recollection and of hopeless love.
So might they come with time, at last with time,
Not to forget, ah never to forget,
But gradually in my far-off doom
To acquiesce, and closer grow to me,
Being old and near the greeting that awaits
All souls that loved beyond the earthly grave.
But now! Ah, sweet, forgive me if my thought
Seems false to thee and to return to them,
It is not so; but I am troubled sore
And suffer many things because of them,
And lest they pass away ere I return,
Then, sweet, forgive me, speak and ease my fears."

Canto 6

Then she to him with lingering eyes of dew:
"Far be it from me that I come between
Thee and thy aged father and mother old
Who pine for thee beside the unanswering wave,
And unresponding billow: then thou art
Their only son; no other to console,
No daughter to put arms about their neck,
And whisper sweet untruths with good intent;
For often a girl may to the heart convey
Comfort in ways not understood of men.
Then as thou sayest, dread uncertainty
Far worse than actual shock of sudden truth.
I would not intervene to break the past
And shatter all those holy memories.
But then! O then! If thou shouldst leave me quite,
Forgive me, Gilbert, that I can but think
A little of the life forlorn to be.
Ere I had met thee, simple were my days
And if tranquillity be happiness,
Then was I happy; for the simple toil
That calls an Eastern maiden to her task

Was all-sufficient; to and fro I went
And my grave father pleased, and that I pleased
Was all my life; little to me he spoke,
And never of the matters of the heart;
Since in the East a maid secluded lives,
Walled in; and exiled and deaf and blind and dumb;
So that I had no audience but the stars,
Nor any close companion but the moon.
Then! Then! When West broke in upon the East,
Then languid thou wast carried to this house,
And suffering, with strange and alien eyes
Thou didst regard me mistily and mute,
Then by thy coming all my life did cease,
For a new splendour burst upon my soul.
It was not thou, but all that thou didst mean,
O breaker of a silence as of tombs!
O hurler of a bolt from serene skies!
Thou, thou didst pluck the veil from off my face,
Aye, and the deeper veil from off my soul.
Then I began to breathe, to move and live,
And the sweet stirring of a vaster life

Caught at my heart and like to coming spring,
With a wild ache and odour streamed on me.
I had been so enfolded till that hour,
That the first falling dew of thee was pain,
Pain and yet joy; a light, yet not a light,
A light that made my darkness yet more dark.
And when I came to minister to thee,
The solace that I gave thee made more deep
What I had dreamed ere to thy couch I came.
To hover o'er thee, to suppress each sound,
To see that silence sweetly was observed
And that no voice broke in too harsh on thee;
These, all these duties added to my flame,
And made that active which till now had slept.
The placing of a pillow at thy head,
The bringing of a cool draught to thy lips,
To ease thee in the hot and fiery night,
These tasks but fed like fuel silent fire.
And after, when thou hadst the strength to speak,
In broken whisper, then in stammering tongue,
Which soon our Eastern music and our words
Learned to pronounce; when of a different land,

Of distant sun, and glooms of heavy dew,
Of peaceful farms, and wandering cattle thou
Didst give me the strange picture, I have wept,
I know not why, but still so sweet it seemed.
So thou becam'st to me more than thyself
An image of the half-world yet unseen,
And in deep night I felt thy claims arise
Over the English graves and English fields.
Such hast thou been to me! Ah not, believe,
Merely a human being but lying crowned
With mystery of gardens and of grass,
And shivering trees, and birds invisible,
And with the strange spray of a solemn sea.
For never the great sea have I beheld
But in thy words, never the thousand ships,
Nor heard the bursting billow at midnight.
O, thou hast sung to me from thy sick bed
Of Wonder and of things beyond my ken,
A messenger from other worlds art thou,
And ah! I cannot lose thee, let thee go,
No not for father's or for mother's sake,
For going thou dost take away my dreams,
My very being and breath, all which I late
Have learned of the great world in which we
dwell.

O Gilbert, wheresoever thou goest I go,
And if I aid or can contrive escape,
Dear, leave me not behind! I should but pine,
And wither slowly to an Eastern grave.
Then should my father say to me 'My child,
What ails thee?' Or some man of medicine call,
Fool, with his herbs and drugs to make me well.
Then dying to my father I perchance
Would speak, and 'Father,' weakly I would say,
'Since he hath gone, the life in me is gone,
With his departing I am lone and lost.
Ah, if thou wouldst my breath revisit me,
Call him again over the foreign sea,
Else I shall go without him to my grave.' "

Canto 7

Meanwhile in England, by the grey sea-ridge
Did Gilbert's father and his mother old
Mourn over him, from the red hour of dawn,
Which slowly lit the sea and brought the day,
Till in mid-heaven, like to an empress' throne,

The sun above the vassal waters reigned,
And so till he declined transparent bright,
Or on a cloudy wonder glorious,
The vast orb in the Western ocean sunk,
Ceased not these two in silence to lament.
What use for words? O'er the lone waste they gazed,
The waste that would not yield them up their son,
Or bring on its horizon any sail.
And the days passed, the months passed, and the years,
But never the red dawn on lighted sea,
Or the sun standing noon-tide emperor,
Or setting in the wonder of his clouds,
Gave them a hope or faintest gleam of hope.
At length the father said: "What think you, wife?
Here to abide will bring not Gilbert back,
For he may touch upon a different shore,
And landed make for London in his zeal.
He knows not that we have forsook the town,
Wearied at last of bales and merchandise.
If he should sudden upon London burst,
Thinking to take us by some sweet surprise,

And full of memories, of adventure hard,
Of battle-shocks, perchance imprisonment,
And many evils happily escaped,
Think the long night to while away from rest:
What should he think to find a closèd house,
A barred up mansion, and a solitude,
Where mighty welcome he might most expect."
But she replied: "He will not come again,
For I am sure within me he is dead.
Some word, some wandering whisper from the sea
Had reached us all this time full sure am I,
Or some belated warrior of our host,
Released perhaps from foreign chains would find
A way to me to tell me of his fate,
Whether alive or dead." Then said the man,
"Surely a wonder would it be if we
Had any word or wandering whisper heard,
Or any warrior from afar had come
To apprise us of his state. That were indeed
Too great things to expect; no, his first news
Will be himself. But all these things apart,
Whether our son be dead or still alive,
Doth not the lonely surge increase our pain,

Doth not the nightly billow with slow break
Still more and more our loss accentuate?
Alas, how the bereavèd mind can read
Its proper desolation into waves!
And mingle with that mighty music all
That lies about the heart and will not leave us
Thought-free a moment. Then I say again
The pain were less, where all that murmur comes
Of various life, and various faces seen,
For nothing, no not London, vast houses
And loud and hoarse the narrow-streeted town,
Can interpose between us and our dead,
Or once distract us from our memory.
Still even slight and passing things may make
The intolerable weight a little lift,
And in the shifting show and changèd scene
Relief is drawn, relief however short.
Is not this wise then, for a double cause,
Now to forsake, if only for a time,
The melancholy coast and hanging clouds,
The grey reminding rocks and floating gulls?"
So these two journey back to London town,
A journey then tardy and dangerous,
Full of delays, and ever with a fear

Of footpad or of mounted robber met.
At last the little city, large to them,
Still in the madding cloaks of masonry,
Yet with a smokeless charm, upon them broke.
There then once more they rested agèd limbs,
And still desired the coming of their son.
But he, whether because more sultry grew
The air and full of buzzings and of stings,
Lay in long fever; ever at his side
The Eastern damsel with cool hands of peace,
And in the whirl of his delirium
Ever and ever "London" would he cry,
And "London"; so that word of all our tongue
She treasured fast and murmured to herself,
And thought she, "If his flight I do contrive,
And loose him to the far and pined for shore,
And to those reverend hearts that mourn for
him,
To London will he go, whate'er the way,
However far the plains and seas between,
And if he will not suffer me to go
But as his page to follow and attend,
For all his whims who knows if I know not?
If he forbid me then to follow him,
Unseen, unheard I will to London haste,

And saying his sweet name from door to door,
At last I will discover him, and then
Let him do with me even as he please."
And "London" still she murmured to herself.

Canto 8

But as the prisoner's strength returned to him;
And sadly back she nursed him in her thought,
For it would come to pass that he at length
Restored and full of rest would leave her side;
So, with his gathering strength, the thought grew strong
To fare away over the distant sea
And clasp those first inspirers of his life
Yet once again on his long parted breast.
And she—she saw the ungovernable hope
Spring in his eyes each day and settle there.
Then would she commune thus with her lone heart.
"And if I find some means for his escape,
If I devise his solitary flight,
For without me, and my sad aid at hand,
He never shall escape this prisoning stone!
If I, who love him so, deliberately,

Even with stratagem, and peril too,
Conspire to lose him, what the gain to me?
Why should I not then hold him as a bird,
My favourite bird to look on at all hours,
To keep and nurture, ever in my sight?
Shall I, who hang upon the thought of him,
Unbar the cage for my own misery,
And see with swimming eyes him flee away?
For never again shall he return to me,
Once having gained the vast and spacious plains,
Even should he meet with violence on his road,
Or yet again a prisoner should be held,
Or put to midnight-death in forest deep,
Or in wild tempest thrown upon the track,
And all that lovely body with the sea
Rise and subside, then sink for evermore.
Whate'er might chance to him in wandering
Back to that isle which lures him night and day,
Never shall I behold him any more,
Unless"—and now a light came to her cheek
And sudden splendour on her upraised face,
"Unless I set him free; then follow him,
Not as his servant or attending page,

But all unknown, whate'er the perils be.
For I should have more comfort in my heart,
Be better able to oppose distress,
Or danger or whate'er calamity,
So that I felt each step that I did take,
Was bringing me the nearer to his side.
O this were better! Ten times better this
Than here to languish full of memories,
Breathing what has been rather than what is.
My mother long is dead: she shall not mourn
Whate'er betide me; only I repent
My father stern, yet ever soft to me,
Left to uncertainty of my wild fate.
He to his father flies, but mine I leave.
And when did ever a woman or a girl,
Whose heart love filled, weigh old against the young,
Or father against lover; or ever set
The maiden past against the future wild,
That beckons on and ever on her soul?
So cannot I: at once I'll set him free,
But never a word of my adventure hint
And half the pain of his departure miss
In secret joyous knowledge of the heart."
So chanced it then that, preparation made,

The Guard, cajoled or bribed or drugged asleep,
Upon a lucky night of solid gloom,
He, softly swinging down a rope, touched earth,
And was away into the ebon night.
But ere he went, again and yet again
He thanked her, and would kiss her burning lips
And swear him chained unto her memory
For ever: and if things about his hearth
Prospered, he would return and ask her hand,
Of the stern father from whose grasp he fled.
And all the while her heart was smiling fast
To think that she would follow him amain,
He knowing nothing. Last she asked of him
To say again the far-off city's name,
Which he so oft had murmured in his dreams.
"London," he murmured; "London," murmured she,
As though she clasped to her a talisman
Or put a key within her bosom safe
That should unlock the gates of all the West.
He being fled, Haidee her father's wrath
Must dare; but never in his mind it slipped

That she, his daughter, that escape devised.
The guards were fettered for a while; but they
Had payment full, and at their fetters laughed.
The storm of passion from her father passed;
His rage subsiding as a sea, when winds
That lifted the wild billow to the clouds
Sink; and the sun smiles out upon a floor
Of gold and scarcely heaving waters bright.
And now her own more perilous escape
She must devise and without quailing make.
First thought she, should she have companions by
And take one with her but to exchange a word,
And lighten the great solitude of nights?
But better at the last it seemed that she
Should all the adventure brave out by herself,
And if she perished, perish then alone.

Canto 9

At last a night fell dim, benignant, dark
Midnight consenting all her stars concealed
And ruled the huge heaven with her serried clouds.
She then the long expected night embraced,

And being clothed, accoutred as a youth,
With free limbs slipt down from the massy tower
Where since a child she slept. She lighted safe;
And being well-provided in her dress
With many a jewel secreted; here was hid
A pearl and here a diamond, here again
A sea-blue sapphire; for the peril naught
Dismayed her: forth she sped into the dark.
Nor did she reck of robber or of thief,
Or being slain in some dark forest glade,
For sake of what she carried fearlessly.
The one thought in her brain and in her heart
Was that she followed him throughout the world.
And in deep ecstasy she wandered on,
Under the massy cloud. Who guided her?
For no stars in the firmament uprose,
By which she might have told her trackless way,
And no moon came to aid her on her road.
Still through the gloom she pressed; and to herself
"London" she murmured; "London" yet again,

As though she cried unto that city far
To take her to its arms, and to his arms
Who in delirium murmured oft the name.
Wearied at last, uncertain of her path,
She lay down in a forest, all whose leaves
Murmured about her in a solemn song,
Or congregated hymn of foliage.
Then as the dawn not yet appearing made
A stillness in the world and one by one
Bird upon bird awoke, and dreamily
Each to the other dimly felt for voice,
She sank asleep and as she slept, she dreamed.
Yet not of him she loved, so much she dreamed,
But that a child unto them two was born,
And was a mighty figure in that land
Whereto he journeyed, and she followed him.
Dim was the history to her unrolled,
And now one scene was bright and then was lost;
But he their son, it seemed, was as a king,
And friend of some great king who ruled the land.
He and the English monarch to and fro
Paced hand in hand and to each other spoke,

Now gravely and now lightly, so it seemed;
They were as comrades, sportive as are boys;
And nothing, one would deem, would part these two,
Or jar the easy friendship of the twain.
Sudden she woke and cried aloud and sprang
Upright: the ghostly forest had been changed
To some cathedral, and an altar stood
Before her, and as on that altar she
Gazed; on a sudden armèd knights inrushed
With drawn swords and their son who mildly stood
Still in the holy place, they seized and slew.
She looked about her on the leaves for blood,
His blood; for blood of his had sure been shed,
Had she not seen it dripping on the steps?
Long while she stood and pondered on the dream,
Then to the unaccustomed air and space,
The falling dew, the murmuring of trees,
The vision she ascribed; and yet how like
That murdered face that reeled before her still
To him whom now she followed, though in fear,
Yet followed, and would follow to the end!

Here idle all her travel to recount;
How captured by a lawless brigandage,
And how, by her strange tale and eyes of truth,
She won from violence their captain rude,
Who sent with her an escort to the coast.
How then by giving certain splendid stones
She was conveyed over sea, though once well nigh
Wrecked, and cast up upon a rocky shore.
Yet even in Eastern desert, in forest huge
And various murmuring ocean still it seemed
That London wooed her safely to its arms.
At last in the first dawn before her rose
Those cliffs so dear that pine across the wave,
And yearn forever in a broken thought
With faces that remember or aspire.
There disembarked; yet she no word could say,
But to the questioning inhabitants
"London," and "London," "London" yet again,
So, slowly and by difficult degrees,
Through many a village, many a town made she,
And all with wonder gathered round her steps.
Some styled her as an Eastern sorceress,

And she from many a village and small town
Was driven with the cries of ignorance.
Yet never failed her heart; and since she still
Held sewn about her many a glimmering gem,
Easily could she bargain for her way
Until by midnight on the highroad shone
The city of her wishes and her prayer,
The home of him she came so far to find.
Here day on day she wandered thro' the streets,
Murmuring the city's name through city ways,
Yet never the abode of him she loved
Could light on, until fortune drew her steps
Thither unto her goal of wandering.

Canto 10

Long wandered she about the London streets,
And seeming strange, was ever followed close
By curious crowds. To these she strove in vain
How to be understood; two words alone
She knew and could repeat "London" the one,
The other "Gilbert." London she had found,
But still the jewel of all London sought.

Then said she to herself: "How know I then
That he far in the East hath perished not?
How know I then that he has reached the
shore?
Perchance by armèd men was he waylaid
And murdered in the dark of forests far.
Perchance by wild beasts was asunder torn,
Or furious winds have driven him upon rocks,
Or cliffs perhaps of desert islands; there
To languish solitary by the sea,
To starve beside a barren ocean; or
Seized by the barbarous habitants and slain.
Who knows but I, the weaker, may have
'scaped
That he, the stronger, hath encountered? So
Fruitless my voyage all! A fruitless love,
And expedition vain across the world!
Here now in London where his life began,
The city which he murmured in his dreams,
I wander, but I find not what I seek.
Ah, Gilbert, if in the great city thou
Still dwellest, if thy father's hearth at last
Thou hast attained; then pity me, beloved,
Who wander and roam and yearn but for thy
face.

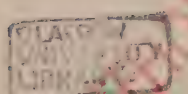
O art thou not aware of me, although
Thou seest me not, nor ever word is changed
Between us two; still art thou not aware
That I am breathing air not far from thee?
O thou must know! The greetings to thy sire,
The expected kiss upon thy mother's lips,
These if thou livest long ago were given.
Now hast thou leisure to remember me,
And all those hot nights of the Eastern moon,
When to and fro I ministered to thee,
And with a soft strange song thy pain assuaged.
Think—ah but think—of all those miles of earth
And sea that I have traversed for thy sake,
And turn thy thoughts a little way to me.
Gilbert, I faint, I die apart from thee!"
So would she rhapsodise to her lone soul
And commune with herself for half the night.
Her jewels sleep and nourishment procured,
Room in a tavern tranquil, where she dwelt
All unmolested though in London's heart.
At last it so fell out that on an eve
Of glorious sunset burning after rain

She saw and stood and knew the man she sought.
But he, remembering her in other guise
And in a different land, pierced not the garb
Which had so well disguised her on her quest.
Then came she to him and thus murmured she:
"Sir, am I all forgotten? Is it past
The happy time upon that Eastern shore?
Ah but you know me not! Am I a boy
Think you, though many so would guess at me?
No, but a very woman and your own.
Lo, the great seas, the sands, the blackening winds,
All have I dared; the perils of the road,
The midnight ambush, and the leap of beast,
These and much more I lightly overpast.
See what a great love can accomplish! See
How it is capable of stern resolve
And not of sweetness only: for it means
To dare, to fight, for ever to endure.
Thus have I proved that love is not a thing
Of brief and burning kisses and an end.
Steadfast it is as wild and strong and sure.
The love in me disdained the rising seas,

Made light of mountains, and of heat and
cold;
And safe have I come even to thy arms;
Dost thou not know me, Gilbert? Gaze and
gaze
Until at last some far familiar way
Will strike upon thy recollection sweet,
And thou wilt spring and take me in thy arms.
But think not that I come to harass thee,
To be a daily burden in thy life;
There needs but from thy eyes a lonely look,
A little sad dissuasion of thy brows,
And I am gone from thee for evermore.
A little, a very little is enough
To send me back over the mighty seas,
Forgiving, yet not once forgetting thee.
O not a word is needed for that end,
A slightest motion of thee shall suffice."
But he, now growing used to the idea;
For at the first he heard as in a dream;
In a slow rapture took her to his breast,
And kissed her here, now there, and many
times.
"Hath ever," said he, "such a feat of love
Been known in this dull world as this of thine?

Was ever so much risked or so much dared?
Now to my mother will I make you known
And through the long night shall your tale be told.
And if as far away thou didst agree
To turn to Christ, we then will married be,
And all the bells of London shall be rung."

And so it came to pass, and that ere long,
These two were wedded while the spires acclaimed.



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